

История развития Еврейской Автономной области

Абдуразакова Диана Сергеевна

Приамурский государственный университет имени Шолом-Алейхема

студент

Аннотация

В статье представлен расцвет социальной, культурной и политической жизни Еврейской Автономной области.

Ключевые слова: Еврейская Автономная область, Советский Союз, советская власть, культура, литература.

The history of development of the Jewish Autonomous Region

Abdurazakova Diana Sergeevna

Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University

Student

Abstract

The article describes the coloration of social, cultural, and political life in the Jewish Autonomous region (J.A.R).

Keywords: The Jewish Autonomous Region, the Soviet Union, the Soviet government, culture, literature.

One of the forming factors of the association of Jewish migrants at the beginning of the 30's of century, together with the ideological persuasions, the overall «fate», political sensitivity and the corporate behavior, was skill. «Culture, skill - this is the space, where by the centuries man his pains and hope». Interest in the skill, and in particular to the literature and the theater, composed the basis of self-consciousness of Jews as social group with the special cultural past.

Along with its effort to encourage Jewish migration to the J.A.R., the Soviet government also tried to foster the region's specifically Jewish nature through the use of Yiddish. Yiddish was intended to serve as the bedrock of a secular, proletarian Soviet Jewish culture and community J.A.R. would become the new center of Soviet Jewish life, embodying the principles of Yiddishism and expressing the national sentiments of Soviet Jews. In 1936 the government issued a decree elevating Yiddish institutions in the J.A.R. to a preeminent position in the Soviet Union. A Yiddish-language conference planned for early 1937 (but never held because of the purges) was «intended to result in the establishment in Birobidzhan of academic and educational institutions empowered to supervise the Yiddish language and Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union».

In 1935 the government decreed that all government documents, including public notices, announcements, posters, and advertisements had to appear in both

Yiddish and Russian, Street signs, railway station signs, and postmarks appeared in both Yiddish and Russian, and police and judicial investigations could also be conducted in Yiddish, if the parties involved were Jewish. Jews also served prominently in government and party posts, and the state publicized the «Jewish» coloration of social, cultural, and political life in the J.A.R. In addition, a variety of Yiddish cultural institutions, including a newspaper and a library with a sizable Judaica collection, were established. The Yiddish newspaper *Birobidzhaner shtern* first appeared in 1930 and has been published (except for a few years during World War II) on a regular basis. This is the edition for July 24, 1931. It is one of the few Yiddish newspapers still published in the world today. The Jewish Theater named after Lazar Kaganovich, a Jew who was a trusted aide of Stalin, opened in 1934 when members of the Moscow State Jewish Theater arrived in the J.A.R. along with musicians, technical personnel, and costumes. Its first show was an adaptation of a Sholem Aleichem story, and, in addition to performing for the residents of the J.A.R., the troupe also toured the Soviet Far East. The government also set up schools in which Yiddish was the language of instruction, and Yiddish became an obligatory subject in schools where classes were conducted in Russian. In 1937 a group of Jewish artists from Chicago celebrated the Birobidzhan experiment by issuing a portfolio of lithographs entitled *A Gift to Biro-bidzhan* in an edition of two hundred. The statement issued by the artists reflected their solidarity with the Jews of the J.A.R. and noted their commitment as artists to help build a more just world: «We, a group of Chicago Jewish artists, in presenting our works to the Builders of Birobidzhan are symbolizing with this action the flowering of a new social concept wherein the artist becomes moulded into the clay of the whole people and becomes the clarion of their hopes and desires. Thus we will better translate in our media, these aspirations for a new and better life ... to a more understanding world, from our fountain of creation the first sparkling glimpses that are the new Jew In the making [1]».

Well-known Yiddish writers and Jewish intellectuals visited the J.A.R. in the 1930s and affirmed the official line that the Birobidzhan project embodied the national and cultural aspirations of Soviet Jewry. For example, in 1932 the Yiddish writer David Bergelson visited Birobidzhan and participated in a literary club, which served as a gathering place and source of inspiration for Jewish writers. When the Yiddish literary journal *Forpost* (Outpost) began to appear in 1936, critics hailed it as an important Soviet-Jewish journal, which «should be the central organ of not only local Birobidzhan forces, but of all creative forces of Soviet Jewish society interested in the construction of the Jewish Autonomous Region». At other times, the use of Yiddish was dearly intended for propaganda purposes, as in 1936 when Kaganovich visited the J.A.R. and attended a party conference where he and other officials gave parts of their speeches in Yiddish.

It must be remembered, however, that the political climate in the 1930s required writers to tailor their work to fit the uniform ideological mold established by the regime. In the early 1930s the editors of the *Birobidzhaner shtern*, the Yiddish daily in the J.A.R. since 1930, organized a group of Jewish proletarian writers whose aim was to illustrate the benefits of Soviet power to Jews and

«reflect in Jewish literature the socialist construction of Birobidzhan», particularly the fulfilling and overfulfilling of the Five Year Plans among workers and collective farmers. As far as they were concerned, Soviet Jewish culture served the interests of the regime by celebrating the achievements of Stalin, of Five-Year Plans, and of socialist construction. Literary efforts focused on the transformation of Soviet Jews into productive citizens who labored in the collective and state farms and factories that began to dot the landscape of the J.A.R. Taming the harsh taiga, contributing to the building of socialism in the Soviet Far East, and «laying the foundation for a new, multifaceted Jewish culture» were the themes deemed worthy by the Kremlin.

In contrast to the stultifying religious environment and grinding poverty of the shtetl, the J.A.R. signaled the dawn of a new age for Jews, an age in which Soviet Jews would express contempt for Jewish tradition, free themselves of the burdens, limitations, and prejudices of the past, and glorify Soviet power as they became integral members of the socialist society under construction. Two Yiddish novels, by David Bergelson (*Birobidzhaner*) and M. Alberton (*Birobidzhan*), published soon after the beginning of Jewish settlement, illustrate this literary emphasis on the J.A.R. as the embodiment of Jewish life; in the words of one reviewer, the works portray the «first steps of Jewish settlers» to the new center of Jewish society.

Yiddish schools in the J.A.R. reinforced this emphasis on socialist construction. As of 1957, sixteen schools existed, with close to two thousand students, and all subjects, including the natural sciences and math, were taught in Yiddish. Indeed, a Yiddish version of a school text on the geography and economic resources of the J.A.R. appeared even before the Russian-language text did. Not surprisingly, these schools followed the lead of other Yiddish schools in Belarus and Ukraine by turning their back on traditional Jewish education, with its focus on religion and Hebrew. Instead, the Jewish content of these schools was heavily laden with propaganda and designed to instill feelings of Soviet patriotism and loyalty to Stalin and his policies. Courses on Jewish literature included texts by Sholom Aleichem and Mendele Mokher Sforim because of their focus on the Jewish poor and depictions of impoverished shtetl life. In turn, courses on Jewish history stressed class struggle and the exploitation of the Jewish poor by Jewish communal institutions controlled by rabbis and wealthy Jews. Yet as Zvi Gitelman observes about Yiddish schools in Ukraine and Belarus in the 1920s, they «differed from the general schools in form and not in substance.... Of course, it was not only *Jewish* history which was distorted almost beyond recognition.... Imprisoned by its own ideology and preconceptions, the Communist Party ... had an extremely limited area in which to experiment with the creation of a Soviet Jewish culture and a Soviet Yiddish educational system» [1].

To be able to live in a region devoted specifically to their cultural needs undoubtedly attracted many Soviet Jews to the J.A.R. Not all heard the call, however. As one woman who grew up in Gomel, Belarus, remembered, «Gomel was a real Jewish city ... and so in that sense we felt as if everything was ours.... We didn't have to think about going to Birobidzhan». One person who felt the lure

of the J.A.R., however, was Isaac Prishkol'nik, who went to Waldheim in the mid-1930s as a teenager precisely because its status as the proclaimed center of Soviet Jewry appealed to his commitment to Yiddish. Prishkol'nik, who still spoke Yiddish with his wife and some of his neighbors in the early 1990s, noted that Waldheim in the 1930s compared favorably to Smolensk, his hometown west of Moscow. Not only was «Yiddish spoken everywhere» when he arrived, but he did not experience anti-Semitism and felt «more comfortable» in Waldheim than in Smolensk. Fira Kofman, another longtime resident of the J.A.R., arrived in Birobidzhan in 1936. Like Prishkol'nik, Kofman was an enthusiastic teenage member of the Young Communist League who responded to the government's appeal to move to the J.A.R. and help build a socialist homeland for Soviet Jewry. As she recalled in 1994, Birobidzhan possessed a distinctive Jewish air. «Yiddish was heard on the streets.... We had Jewish schools Students attending a Korean school in the village of Blagoslavennyi, 1936. The region designated for Jewish settlement in 1928 was inhabited by Great Russians, Cossacks, Koreans. and Ukrainians who had moved there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the mid-1930s some 4,500 Koreans lived in the J A R. and, like the Jews, were entitled to attend schools where classes were conducted in their national language, a Jewish theater, a Jewish restaurant where one could eat real Jewish food.... So, one could feel the Jewish atmosphere. Why not? This is, after all, the Jewish Autonomous Region» [1]. Both Prishkol'nik and Kofman fondly remembered their years as young adults in the J.A.R. of the 1930s precisely because they believed that their hopes, dreams, and expectations as young Communists and Jews were fulfilled by living in the Soviet Zion. As the lives of Prishkol'nik and Kofman illustrate, the Kremlin's efforts to establish a Jewish homeland drew sustenance from such popular impulses.

Officials in the J.A.R. actively combated religious practices among Jews. Though the existing sources make it difficult to assess the extent of religious observance in the J.A.R. in the 1930s, it is clear that some Jews did practice their religion, including the baking of matza for Passover. During his 1930 visit to the J.A.R., Otto Heller, the prominent German Communist, noted the existence of a makeshift prayer house made of mud and grass. Similarly, other visitors to the region in the early 1930s stated that Jewish settlers observed Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In 1937 a group of Jews, including one man who had brought a Torah to Birobidzhan, set up a *minyan*, which was a nonregistered and unofficial assembly that met and prayed on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays in a private apartment in lieu of a synagogue. At Passover time, however, a series of lectures and other events were held in factories and workers' clubs to undercut the appeal of Judaism. Organized by the regional League of the Militant Godless, the lectures covered a range of topics such as the incompatibility of socialism and religion. Moreover, they specifically targeted women, who were seen as the bulwark of religious belief and practices in the Jewish family. Given the absence of a synagogue and the prevailing political climate, which made open religious observance risky, the antireligion campaigns enjoyed no small degree of success as Jews found it difficult to practice their religion. In an effort to combat religious

observance among Jews, the leadership of the J A R. organized an antireligion campaign This poster from about 1937 lists a series of lectures and other events that were held in factories and workers' clubs throughout the J.A.R. at Passover time. The titles of some of the lectures given to schoolchildren and factory workers were «The Class Nature of Passover,» «The Struggle against Religion. the Struggle for Socialism, and «The Woman in the Front Ranks of Militant Atheists».

The true nature of relations between Jews and non-Jews is also difficult to determine. Even though officials tended to gloss over anti-Semitic incidents and went out of their way to proclaim the solidarity and friendship among the various nationalities of the J.A.R., at times they did publicize the occurrence of anti-Semitic acts. In 1931 government and party leaders noted that «decent relations» among Jews, Russians, Ukrainians, and Koreans existed, but they also reported an increasing number of «incidents of an anti-Semitic nature», which they attributed to peasants who opposed collectivization and other class enemies working on state farms and in construction. The officials undertook educational efforts to undermine «Great Power chauvinism», the standard way of referring to excessive Russian national pride and patriotism. They claimed this attitude contributed to both anti-Semitism and anti-Asian sentiments and had «deep roots in daily life and at work and ... is hidden and hard to see». They also insisted that Russians were not the only guilty parties in sowing the seeds of national hatred. Koreans living in the J.A.R., officials claimed, displayed a strong dislike of Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish inhabitants of the region.

To some extent, newspaper accounts reveal the frequency with which anti-Semitism reared its head in the region during the 1930s. Generally speaking, the guilty parties were uneducated Russians and Ukrainians who, after having too much to drink, targeted Jews for anti-Semitic name-calling, Jew-baiting, and at times physical assault with fists, knives, and guns. Yet in some cases, the anti-Semites were looking for a scapegoat and blamed Jews for problems on the collective farms and in industrial enterprises. In one instance, a Russian vented his anger at being coerced into joining a collective farm by stating that he resents being told what to do by kikes. Whatever the motivations of the anti-Semites, local authorities vigorously prosecuted anti-Semitic behavior and showed no leniency. In April 1935 a Russian machinist at a railway depot was sentenced to five years in prison for a series of nasty pranks he played on Jewish co-workers. And in 1937 two construction workers who had drinking problems and made anti-Semitic slurs in their dormitory were sentenced to two years in prison.

Библиографический список

1. Еврейская Автономная область. URL: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Еврейская_автономная_область (Дата обращения: 29 декабря 2016).